

UNEASY STREETS



THE DARTMOUTH FILM SOCIETY
SUMMER 1976

Urban Scapes

For years the city has been used as a backdrop for film-making. In an effort to add excitement and intrigue to their films, directors have at times forsaken the pastoral beauty of the small country towns for the hustle and bustle of the teeming metropolises. But more often than not these "city films" have not really utilized their setting as anything more than an exotic backdrop. The skyscrapers awe viewers, there is always a bar open somewhere for the hero to retreat to, and there is an endless variety of people. Although these are strictly city phenomena, they do not add to the film as a complete work. The city is portrayed as being as two dimensional as a stage flat and the story is merely played out against it. Its importance is only as a setting, the city's character is unimportant and often any city will do, no one city is specified.

There does exist, however, a body of films in which the city, and more specifically one particular city, plays an important role in the film's development. Rather than serving as a passive backdrop, in these films the city is an active player. It can be a protagonist (as in *The Knack*) or an antagonist (as in *The Education Of Sonny Carson*); it can cast a pallor over the entire film (as in *Death In Venice*) or serve as the taking off point for comedy (as in *The More The Merrier*). No matter what its role is, the point is that it is an active participant in what happens in the story and has a direct bearing on the characters' development. They are what they are, and do what they do because of the influence of the environment they are in.

Many great films have been staged in the city without taking complete advantage of its unique qualities. Von Stroheim's *Greed* and Welles' *Citizen Kane* both ostensibly use a city as a setting, yet their messages are so universal that they transcend the confines of the city limits and could as easily take place in a quiet country town as in New York and San Francisco respectively. More and more today, though, as the metropolises become megalopolises and the city experience becomes more pervasive, movie makers are

using the city effectively to help communicate their thoughts. Martin Scorsese (whose *Taxi Driver* is a perfect example of a very recent "city film") and Michael Campus both depict ghetto life in their films. For Scorsese the Italian ghetto of New York City comes to life in *Mean Streets*; the problems Harvey Keitel faces are unique to the situation Scorsese himself grew up in. Campus, a Black director, is able to relate to and sympathize with the problems of the socially conscious activist Sonny Carson.

The use of the stylized cities of *The Long Goodbye* and *Death In Venice* serve specific purposes. Robert Altman enhances the character of his seedy detective by using an image of Los Angeles that reflects Phillip Marlowe's character. The director uses the beautiful cinematography of Vilmos Zsigmond to create an aura about the film, and it is this effect that helps to make the movie successful. Similarly, in *Death In Venice* Luchino Visconti is able to augment the basic story by evoking a sense of the decaying and diseased city, an obvious metaphor for the state of the artist. It is the use of Venice-as-symbol that makes the film so effective.

Another film in our series that takes advantage of the symbolic nature of a city is *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. The love affair that takes place in the first city to be ravaged by an atomic warhead is as doomed and fated as the city itself. Director Resnais constantly uses the images and memories of war to underline his points about love. The irony of a love affair staged in this city makes a gripping and pointed statement.

The Knack; *The More The Merrier*; and *One, Two, Three* all play on certain aspects of city life to produce a comic effect. Over-crowded rooming conditions lead to problems (and laughs) in *The Knack* and *The More The Merrier*. In each case it is the situations precipitated by strange rooming arrangements that lead to the humor. In *One, Two, Three* it is the conflicts inherent in a divided city like Berlin that produce the zany problems.

Only in Berlin could the daughter of a hard-core Capitalist find love in the arms of an Eastern European Communist!

Berlin is a city that has gone through more dramatic changes in the last 40 years than any other city. Before The Wall there was Hitler, and this era is brought to life in *Cabaret*. Director Robert Fosse has used the turmoil of the time to propel his musical to new heights in social commentary for that genre. All the anti-semitism, hate and confusion associated with that era and setting is brought to life in an interesting and very effective manner.

Of course the city lends itself very easily to chase scenes and action/adventure stories. *High And Low*; *The Naked City*; *Odd Man Out*; *The Battle of Algiers* and *Kanal* all in one way or another take advantage of this fact. But this is just what so many other films use the idea of city-as-a-backdrop for. The setting is indeed perfect for action, so it is used all too frequently in this manner. What makes these five films different is that they go beyond the usual cliched city scenes and create powerful emotions. *The Battle Of Algiers* is not only a unique city film because the story of the battle is told with a refreshing frankness and truth while also making a statement about the French oppression of the Algerian people. *Kanal*, too, is capable of evoking more than the normal war film does because of the masterful work of its director, Andrzej Wajda.

The other three films in this group use the city as an important player in compelling chase scenes. Everyone of them uses the twisting, maze-like streets and alleys of their respective cities to build up the dramatic moments of the films. They are also much more naturalistic and contain much better characterization than the normal B grade chase film.

Just as the city can be used to enhance pictures whose emphasis is on creating a mood, they can also be

integral parts of films whose dominant theme seems to be character study. The worker of *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning* is a product of his blue collar environment. He feels trapped in his nine-to-five job and he feels he must escape this drudgery on weekends. Also, Mickey (the hero of *Mickey One*) is a product of the gang-land situation in Chicago. Just as Arthur Seaton's life is in many ways determined by the people he works with everyday in *The Factory*, Mickey's hand is forced by those around him. Similarly, Anna Karina moves in and out of the street life of Paris. That the way of life in the city is important to the development of the character is emphasized by Godard by his inclusion of a documentary segment dealing with prostitution in Paris.

Included in the series is a feature length documentary on the city of Calcutta. It provides a grueling, in-depth look at peasant life in the Indian capital and it stands as an important documentation of life in this city as it really is. It is important that this is included in the series because it does provide a non-fictionalized, unstylized look at a city. Because it is important to keep a perspective on what life in the city really is like, the Film Society will offer four documentaries to be screened on June 30, July 14, August 4, and August 11 in the Fairbanks Theater for anyone who is interested. There will be more announcements concerning these films as the term progresses. Between these documentaries and the films offered in the series, the Film Society is offering a varied and comprehensive view of city streets around the world.

Brian O'Sullivan

uneasy streets



THURSDAY JUNE 24

MEAN STREETS (U.S.A., 1973)

The first critically acclaimed film by Martin Scorsese (*Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Taxi Driver*), *Mean Streets* depicts life as he knew it in the Italian section of New York City. This is a gripping and penetrating study of a young man caught between his Catholic upbringing and the peer pressure he feels to join the local Mafia. As with *Taxi Driver*, Scorsese brings the city powerfully to life and creates a work of intense commitment and integrity. With Harvey Keitel and Robert De Niro. (112 min., color)

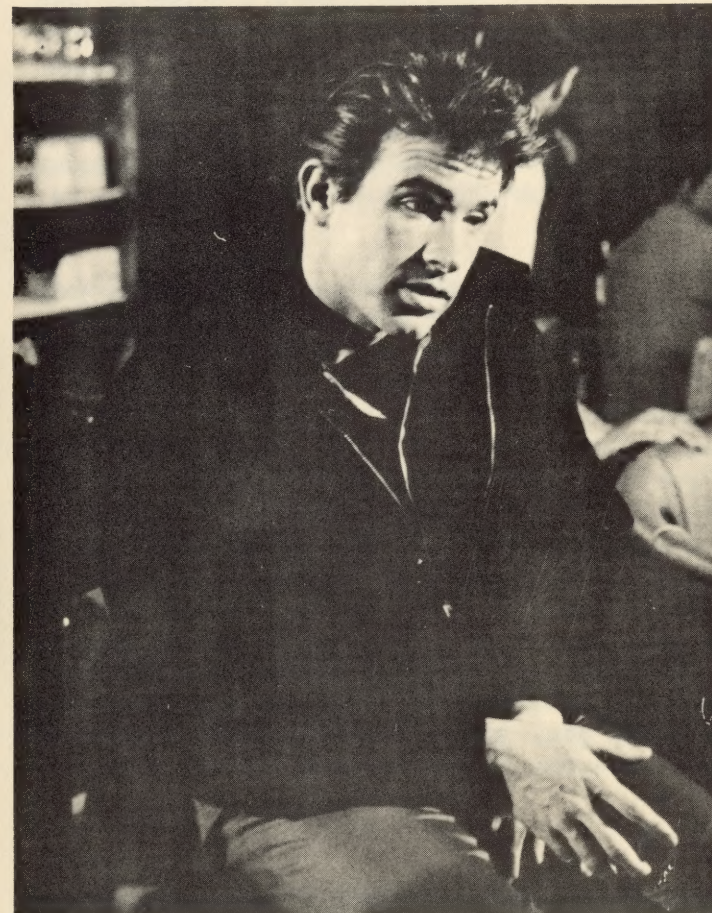
MONDAY JUNE 28

THE NAKED CITY (U.S.A., 1948)

Skillfully directed by Jules Dassin and beautifully photographed by one of Hollywood's most famous cinematographers (William Daniels), this is the film upon which the television series by the same name was based. Barry Fitzgerald stars as a detective who, in the course of investigating a murder, uncovers a ring of jewel thieves. A Naturalistic drama, *The Naked City* is spiced with flashes of humor and a superb chase sequence during which the murderer receives his just deserts. (96 min., b&w)



THE DARTMOUTH FILM SOCIETY SUMMER 1976



MONDAY JULY 26

THE EDUCATION OF SONNY CARSON (U.S.A., 1974)

Based on the first part of Carson's autobiographical book, *The Education of Sonny Carson* details his rise from juvenile delinquent and ex-convict to socially committed activist. Director Michael Campus has managed to capture both the violence of the street gang scenes and the tenderness of the scenes between Carson (Wonderfully played by Rony Clayton) and his girlfriend and father. Although at times the film seems a bit too episodic, it does accurately portray the problems that turned Carson into an activist. (104 min., color)

THURSDAY JULY 29

MIRACLE IN MILAN (Italy, 1951)

Vittorio de Sica is one of Italy's best known directors. With works such as *Bicycle Thief* and *Shoeshine* he established himself as one of the leaders of the neo-realist movement. *Miracle In Milan* represents a step away from neo-realism, but not from the high quality of filmmaking we expect from him. De Sica has called this a fable, and it has the simple magic and moral truth of the best of them. Toto, an abandoned baby is raised by a woman who returns to earth after her death and gives the boy Heavenly assistance in saving the poor families on the outskirts of Milan from greedy businessmen. (95 min., b&w)



THURSDAY JULY 1
CABARET (U.S.A., 1972)

Liza Minelli and Joel Gray both won Academy Awards, as did director Robert Fosse, for their work in this highly engaging and haunting portrait of pre-war Berlin. Miss Minelli stars as an American show-girl and Mr. Grey is the master of ceremonies at the local cabaret. The acts at the night spot reflect the changing social conditions that the singer meets in her day to day life. The greed, racism, and sexual hypocrisy of the prevailing times are underscored by the film's many well done musical numbers. Of all these, though, the most memorable and most upsetting is not one of the cabaret acts, but rather the patriotic outburst by a member of the Hitler youth group. In all ways this is one of the greatest musicals ever produced. (120 min., color)

MONDAY JULY 5
THE KNACK (Britain, 1965)

The man who made the Beatle movies, *The 3 and 4 Musketeers*, and *Robin and Marion* (Richard Lester) has once again created a comedy that is classic in its purity and simplicity. Adapted from the stage play, *The Knack* is the story of one man's luck with the opposite sex and his attempts to bestow this gift upon his roommate when a country girl (played by Rita Tushingham) comes to London. (84 min., b&w)

THURSDAY JULY 8
CALCUTTA (India, 1969)

The city of Calcutta is shown in intimate detail in this documentary made by the French filmmaker Louis Malle (*Le Fou Follet; Lacombe, Lucien; Zazie Dans Le Metro*). The capital city is shown from the point of view of the peasants who live and die in her streets, starved and poorly clothed. Although this is not a fun film to watch, it is extremely well made and provides an important look at one of the most over-crowded cities in the world. (115 min., color)

MONDAY JULY 12
THE LONG GOODBYE (U.S.A., 1973)

Robert Altman uses his lyrical style to transform the novel of Raymond Chandler into a highly stylized film which may not accurately reflect Chandler's intentions, but which does render an unmistakably Californian image. Elliot Gould's performance as the somewhat slovenly and seedy detective, Phillip Marlowe, is perfect for the effect that Altman wishes to produce, as is the camera work of Vilmos Zsigmond, who has collaborated with Altman on several pictures now. Here Gould must find the killer of a friend's wife, and the trail to the guilty party is a long and tortuous one. With Nina van Pallandt and Jim Bouton. (112 min., color)



THURSDAY JULY 15
THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS (Italy, 1966)

Spanning the years from 1954 to 1962, Gillo Pontecorvo tells the sad tale of the Algerian revolt against French domination. The causes of the war are eloquently suggested visually, not verbally. There are the over-crowded Casbah buildings, the inequitable living conditions of the French and Algerians, and the opium dens. Perhaps more important, though, is the honesty with which the situation is described. There is little or no romanticizing or simplifying of the moral and practical choices that each side must make; Pontecorvo does not ruin the film's persuasiveness by over indulging in his own beliefs—the complexity of the situation is kept intact. (123 min., b&w)

MONDAY JULY 19
HIGH AND LOW (Japan, 1962)

Although the plot sounds like trite Hollywood melodrama (a businessman must decide whether or not to take advantage of a business deal available to him or to use his life savings to free the kidnapped son of his chauffeur), Kurosawa transcends the story line by developing his characters and by making them all human beings. The film is highlighted by the middle scenes where we stand witness to the endeavors of the police detectives trying to track down the kidnapper throughout the city of Tokyo: here Kurosawa's pacing is always instinctively correct. (143 min., b&w)
NOTE: Due to its length *High and Low* will only be shown once at 7:00 PM.

THURSDAY JULY 22
THE MORE THE MERRIER (U.S.A., 1943)

Starring one of the all time great comedienness, Jean Arthur, this George Stevens production ranks high on the list of 40's comedies. The humor revolves around the fact that war time Washington is over-crowded. In order to help alleviate the housing shortage Connie (Miss Arthur) lets half of her apartment to a businessman, who in turn lets half of his share to an aircraft engineer (Joel McCrea). As the romance between Arthur and McCrea buds, the film keeps up a vivacious tempo, thanks to director Stevens' purely cinematic handling of the situation. With Charles Coburn and Richard Gaines in supporting roles. (104 min., b&w)

MONDAY AUGUST 2
VIVRE SA VIE (France, 1962)

Jean-Luc Godard, one of the most controversial directors of our time, here presents a portrait of the woman he loved, Anna Karina. Although the story itself is about a Parisian prostitute, it is Miss Karina who gives the film its life force and it is quite obvious from the opening titles on that Godard intended this as a showcase for her. The film is split into twelve distinct sections, each with its own title, one of which is a most fascinating and well done documentary on prostitution in Paris. (82 min., b&w)

THURSDAY AUGUST 5
KANAL (Poland, 1956)

The year is 1944 and Warsaw is under attack. In order to save themselves and their city, the troops guarding the city's perimeter must retreat by way of the sewer system and regroup. Andrzej Wajda directed this film that takes place in good part in the underground tunnels that provide protection for the fighters, and he brings a good deal of power and lyricism to all the scenes. His statement is made at the end when the group's leader returns to the sewer to save the few men left behind. (96 min., b&w)

MONDAY AUGUST 9
HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR (France/Japan, 1959)

The first feature length film by one of the leading members of the "Left Bank" group in Paris in the late 50's, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is an eloquent, moving study of a woman and her 24 hour love affair. The opening ten minutes of the film are unrivaled in the annals of filmmaking—Alain Resnais' tracking shots combined with a haunting musical score and Marguerite Duras' dialogue create a mood that prevades the rest of the film and underscores the futility of war and the elusive nature of love. Perfect in her role as the woman, Emmanuele Riva is suitably enigmatic and charming. (88 min., b&w)

THURSDAY AUGUST 12
ODD MAN OUT (Britain, 1947)

Sir Carol Reed passed away this past May, but he left a wealth of great films behind him. Among his best, and certainly one of the most exciting and well made chase/suspense films of all time, is *Odd Man Out*. Johnny MacQueen, leader of an illegal political organization in Belfast, is hunted by the police after his futile attempt to rob a bank. The chase threads through the tightly woven pattern of the city's life and ends with a gunfight at the shipyard where MacQueen meets his end. Reed balances sound and image brilliantly to bring the city to life, and James Mason's acting is a *tour de force*. (117 min., b&w)

MONDAY AUGUST 16
MICKEY ONE (U.S.A., 1965)

Warren Beatty plays a night club entertainer who must go on the lam after a wild party at which he may or may not have committed a crime and upset the members of an underworld gang. He makes a meager living working in cheap dives and living in a small room. Eventually, with the help of his girlfriend, Beatty reappears at a major nightclub. Warren Beatty is excellently cast as Mickey and Arthur Penn directs with a sensitive touch, drawing some remarkably controlled performances from his actors. (93 min., b&w)

THURSDAY AUGUST 19
DEATH IN VENICE (Italy, 1971)

Physical and spiritual disintegration are at the forefront in Luchino Visconti's film based on the short novel by Thomas Mann. The city of Venice is enveloped in a sultry air and rumors spread of a breakout of Asiatic cholera. Through it all composer and conductor Gustave von Aschenbach (in the city for a vacation) follows a beautiful fourteen year old boy, transfixed by the boy's looks and serene expression. After making efforts to make himself look more attractive, the composer is left to die on the beach still watching the young boy. The city and the man reflect each other, and Visconti has captured this fact with his gliding camera and muted colors. (130 min., color)

MONDAY AUGUST 23
SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING (Britain, 1960)

Essentially a character study, *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning* is handled with restraint by Karl Reisz in his first feature picture. It tries to explain and study the one life style open to the young factory worker Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney), and yet it never becomes didactic. The character eventually reaches maturity, but not before fighting it and having some wild Saturday nights, and in the end one is left with the feeling that even though Seaton has taken on some responsibilities he will remain as obstinate as ever. (90 min., b&w)

THURSDAY AUGUST 26
ONE, TWO, THREE (U.S.A., 1961)

Based, in part, on the original script Billy Wilder and Ernst Lubitsch did for *Ninotchka*, this Wilder film has many of the touches of the 30's Lubitsch comedies. The dialogue (Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond) is very amusing and is delivered very well by James Cagney. Cagney plays a Coca-Cola salesman who must look after his boss's boy-crazy teenage daughter for two months in West Berlin. The humor revolves around the Capitalist's daughter falling in love with a Communist, and Cagney's attempts to save his job by separating the pair. (108 min., b&w)

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All Screenings will be at 6:45 and 9:15 except where otherwise noted. All shows are in Spaulding Auditorium.

THE DARTMOUTH FILM SOCIETY SERIES INFORMATION

A full Film Society Subscription is Six Dollars for Dartmouth students and Eight Dollars for all non-students. All full Subscribers may buy guest tickets for one dollar and fifty cents. There is no general admission. Limited Subscriptions for two admissions or two performances are available for three dollars and fifty cents.

Full Subscriptions do not include the cost of some "specials."

Full Subscriptions are sold at the Box Office of the Hopkins Center, and at the door of Spaulding Auditorium one-half hour before the performance.

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